

SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

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Criticisms Spur Review of NIH Contracting

Contract procedures at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are being closely reviewed in the wake of mounting criticism over alleged laxity and favoritism in the burgeoning NIH contract programs.

The criticisms have come from a variety of sources, including the academic world, the press, and Ralph Nader's Health Research Group. Top officials of NIH attribute most of the complaints to ignorance about how the contract programs operate rather than to any actual abuses. "We do not see ourselves sitting upon a volcano of any scandals," says John H. Sherman, acting director of NIH.

But the critics are much less sanguine. They contend that there have already been a few instances of abuse, and they warn that the system holds the potential for major offense. Noting that NIH commands great respect and has an unmatched reputation for integrity in the biomedical community, Dr. Marian Koshland, professor of bacteriology and immunology at the University of California's Berkeley campus, warns, "This could be ended tomorrow with a good scandal." Dr. Koshland presented the viewpoint of concerned members of the biomedical community at a Feb. 23 meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Director of NIH, of which she is a member.

The concern has been prompted, in large part, by NIH's increasing reliance on contracts, as

opposed to grants, to carry out its responsibilities to make progress against such ailments as cancer and heart disease. The contract volume swelled from about \$11 million, or 5.6 per cent of the total NIH budget, in 1958 to \$272 million, or 13 per cent of the total budget, in 1972. Most of the recent growth has come in the cancer and heart areas. The National Cancer Institute is now putting about half of its money into research grants and half into contracts, while the National Heart and Lung Institute is now putting about 22 per cent of its money into contracts.

The chief difference between the contract and grant mechanisms is that, in the case of a contract, NIH specifies the work to be performed and then

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In Brief

Whatever happened to that Science and Engineering Council that Bell Labs' W. O. Baker said would continue to operate following its debut last October in behalf of Nixon's re-election? It's faded like election graffiti, despite published reports that it's formally plugged into the White House. It's never met, has no plans to meet, and never issued the "position" papers that were promised prior to election day. . . . However, Baker, recently elevated to the presidency of Bell Labs, is still a frequent commuter to the White House. His longstanding membership on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board ranks him high with White House staffers, who indicate they are disposed to listen when he talks to them. . . . Newly appointed as assistant executive director of the UN Environment Program: Robert A. Frosch, assistant secretary of the Navy for R&D since 1966. . . . NSF has established a Public Sector Office within its Experimental R&D Incentives Program to test ways of encouraging state and local governments to bring new technology into their operations. Heading it is Elisha Freedman, city manager of Hartford, Conn., from 1963 to 1971, when he became chief administrative officer of Montgomery County, Md. . . . Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) has reintroduced the Vietnam War Ecological Damage Assessment Act (S. 365), which calls upon the President to contract with the National Academy of Sciences for a study of war-caused ecological damage in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The bill has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Department of Modest Announcements

Backed by a \$7.5 million grant from the Fairchild Foundation, Caltech President Harold Brown has announced the establishment of "the outstanding university-connected distinguished-visitor program in the world."

The program, named the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholars Program, after the late founder of the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corp. and Fairchild Industries, provides for visits from a few months to a maximum of two years. "It will mean," Brown is quoted in a Caltech press release, "that at any given time we will have at Caltech 20-25 Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholars. Eminent world leaders in various fields will have the opportunity to share their wisdom with our distinguished faculty and student body, to influence research and teaching at the cutting edge of knowledge, and in turn to be influenced by it."

CRITICISMS SPUR REVIEW

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seeks someone to do it, whereas in the case of a grant, the investigator generally proposes the idea for a research project and then asks NIH to support it. A contractor generally has to perform a specific service by a definite deadline, whereas a grantee, generally a university scientist, is free to follow whatever scientific leads strike his fancy and he is not held to detailed performance specifications.

The main reason NIH has been turning to contracts is that, in carrying out Congressional mandates to make progress against cancer and heart disease, NIH managers feel they must be able to order up certain kinds of studies by specified dates and must be able to dictate the way in which these studies are carried out so that the individual efforts will fit into the overall plan. Moreover, some of the studies require industrial expertise, and NIH has traditionally refused to give grants to profit-making enterprises.

The NIH grant programs have long enjoyed a high reputation for quality and objectivity, largely because they rely on an extensive system of "peer

review" panels to judge the scientific merit of proposed projects. Every grant proposal submitted to NIH (except those which are obviously irrelevant to the agency's health mission) is reviewed by a "study section" of experts in the relevant disciplines, and the evaluation of these experts plays a large part in determining whether a proposed project will be funded. The system is not perfect, but it seems to have the confidence of the biomedical research community. This same community, however, believes that the contract programs are not run as fairly or as well.

The chairmen of the study sections—the NIH grant-evaluating bodies—held two "gripe sessions" last December with Robert Q. Marston, who was then director of NIH. Their concerns, as summarized by Dr. Koshland at the Feb. 23rd meeting, involved both the amount of contract work and its administration. The study section leaders, who are primarily academics, acknowledged that the contract programs have not yet significantly eroded NIH's ability to support good research grant projects, but they expressed fears that, if current trends continue, contracts may absorb so much of the NIH budget that many competent investigators may find it difficult to win grant support. The section chairmen were also sharply critical of the way in which contract programs are administered by various parts of the sprawling NIH complex.

Dr. Koshland said there is a "very serious conflict of interest" problem in some institutes because a powerful individual will sometimes be in a position to control the design of a project, influence the choice of the contractor to carry it out, monitor the contractor's work, and evaluate the desirability of renewing the contract. She did not suggest that anyone has been guilty of financial hanky-panky but rather that some individuals can use their positions in the contracting network to gain a competitive advantage for themselves or their friends. She also said the study section chairmen believe a "buddy system" often determines the award of contracts in contrast to the peer group evaluation which prevails in awarding grants.

Other complaints, as summarized by Dr. Koshland or by an NIH document, include charges that: contract work is often "second-class research;" contracts give "poor value for the dollar" (some cynics say the only difference between a grant and a contract is that a contract costs more); contracts are used for the "aggrandizement of program officials' scientific stature," particularly when NIH officials are allowed to author scientific papers related to the projects on which they award contracts; the advertising for contracts is inadequate, since few academic scientists read the government-published *Commerce Business Daily*, the chief advertising medium; the deadlines for submitting contract proposals are "excessively

Recommendations for NIH

The seven recommendations of the NIH Program Mechanisms Committee include, in paraphrase:

1. Each NIH bureau, institute, division, and major subdivision should review annually the objectives, priorities, and accomplishments of its programs with its senior advisory body at a public meeting.

2. NIH should establish uniform policies and procedures by which its component units will handle program development and management of projects funded by contracts and grants.

3. NIH should adopt specific criteria for selecting the grant or contract method for funding extramural activities.

4. NIH should adopt procedures for continuous evaluation of its management practices and should develop techniques to measure the performance of its programs.

5. NIH should make a greater effort to reprogram funds from one budget category to another, thus providing NIH managers greater freedom to decide whether a grant or contract is the best mechanism in a specific case.

6. NIH should improve its communication of information on NIH missions and methods to the academic and scientific community, other components of the government, and the public.

7. NIH should consider consolidating into a single office the responsibility for coordinating administration of all granting and contracting practices.

(Continued on page 4)

Science and Government: All's Quiet at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

While the demise of the White House science office and its organizational affiliates remains bitterly mourned by those who served and benefited from them, the view from inside the administration is that the reorganization (SGR Vol. II, No. 3) is of no broader significance than, let's say, a fierce bureaucratic spat over the design of Forest Ranger uniforms.

History-minded science and government romantics tend to view the dismantling of the Office of Science and Technology (OST) in terms of who's going to alert the President to the next equivalent of the atom bomb or Sputnik, and who's going to look after the delicacies involved in the care, feeding, and application of the nation's scientific and technical resources; meanwhile, the concomitant dismantling of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) is similarly regarded as denying the government's top officials the utmost policy wisdom that can be mustered from some of the nation's most accomplished practitioners of science and technology.

Well, SGR has spent the past week visiting some of the administration executives who have inherited the science-policy debris, and the impression they generate ranges between puzzlement and indifference. "Oh," explained a non-scientist staffman who occupies a key position, "every group wants their advocates close to the President, but there's just no justification for cluttering up the White House staff with science specialists. The problems aren't that urgent or important."

Within the White House, he explained, the top priorities are considered to be international trade, wage policies, transportation, and "congressional demands for testimony." "Those are the things that dominate our efforts," he explained, adding, "Where does science fit into any of that?"

Considering that OST was deep into a series of studies that were intended to contribute to the resolution of some of those problems, was it likely that the new organizational arrangement would enlist scientific advice for this purpose? "We haven't launched anything yet," he explained, "When scientific advice is needed," he said, "we'll call upon the Foundation," referring to the designation of H. Guyford Stever, director of the National Science Foundation, as a free-floating Scientific Adviser, summonable by the President and other administration officials who wish his advice.

"Will anything be done about replacing PSAC?" the staffman was asked.

"What's that?" he replied. Then he said that he

understood that Stever intended to establish "some sort of council of government research officials. If that's what you mean by PSAC, we'll have something."

What about the often-claimed close linkage between science and technology and industrial innovation and productivity? "We don't understand that problem," was the reply. "We don't know how to harness basic science. We'll have to look at RANN and S. 32," he said, referring, respectively, to NSF's program of Research Applied to National Needs and Senator Kennedy's National Science Policy and Priorities Act, which would establish within NSF a NASA-like agency for boosting "civilian" research. "I'm personally sympathetic to leaving basic research alone," he explained, "but there are problems of limited resources. You can't give basic more and also expand applied research."

The key figure in the new arrangement is Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz in his newly devised capacity as economic czar for the President. As jurisdictions are now sliced up in the White House, NSF Director Stever reports to Shultz. What, then, are Shultz's views on some of the problems that are agitating the scientific community, such as federal support for training, the adequacy of funds for basic research, the relationship between R&D and industrial and social needs, and so forth?

Shultz was not available for an interview, but persons close to him simply shrugged and said that these were matters on which, as far as they knew, he had never expressed himself. It was pointed out, however, that Shultz, an industrial economist, comes from an academic background (MIT, 1946-57, University of Chicago, where he was dean of the Graduate School of Business, 1957-62) and that "he understands the problems of science from his acquaintanceship with scientists."

However, it was explained that the reorganization of the White House staff was specifically designed to prevent advocacy from coming directly to the President. "When an issue arises that requires presidential decision, the system provides for staff analysis of the various cases. And that's what we present to the President. We won't be having different people going in there to argue their case in front of him."

"The essential point," it was stated, "is that there are no urgent problems of science and technology in any shape whatever that confront this administration. No one is beating down the door with problems."—DSG

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short," with the result that proposals are hastily thrown together and inadequately reviewed at the submitting institution; and contract proposals are reviewed at NIH by groups that lack the perspective needed to pass sound scientific judgment on the merits of the proposal.

The complaints have been couched in general terms with few specific abuses cited. But when pressed at the advisory committee meeting, Dr. Koshland said she knew of one individual who had sought a \$5,000 contract but was told that he was not asking for enough—he should apply for at least \$50,000 or his project would be deemed too inconsequential to fund. She also said that "the major area of concern" was the National Cancer Institute, which has the largest and fastest-growing contract program. As an example of a particularly powerful individual who allegedly controls all aspects of the contracts under his jurisdiction, she cited Robert J. Huebner, chief of NCI's viral carcinogenesis branch.

NIH officials believe most of this barrage of criticism is based on misinformation and fear. "I don't really think we are all that bad off as far as reviews (of contract awards) are concerned," says Leon Jacobs, associate director for collaborative research, who has been drawing together information on the contracting procedures followed by various parts of NIH. Jacobs challenged the study sections to cite specific abuses instead of "vague allegations." He added: "There are an enormous number of allegations against contracts, but when you start looking into it you find that the contracts that are let are usually justified."

Similarly, Theodore Cooper, director of the National Heart and Lung Institute, and chairman of a committee that was set up by Marston last December to look into NIH program mechanisms, told the Feb. 23rd meeting that the criticisms reflect "a very high degree of lack of information." He suggested that much of the criticism stems from

fear that the contract awards will gobble up money that would otherwise be available for grants. And he concluded that the main weakness in NIH contracting procedures is a failure to explain how the system works. It is not true, he said, that a small group of "power-hungry administrators" is taking over at NIH.

Cooper's committee—known officially as the NIH Program Mechanisms Committee—submitted a report to the director's office on Feb. 14. The report acknowledged that "problems do exist" but it pointed out that "all grant and contract proposals are subjected to a two-level review." In the case of contracts, proposals are reviewed initially by panels of experts from the government and from the outside scientific community, and they are reviewed further by NIH officials, including the institute directors. Outside scientists are also asked to help in the design of most programs before any contract proposals are solicited. Thomas J. Kennedy, a member of Cooper's committee, said that while policies differ from institute to institute, most institute directors believe that they have established "careful, elaborate procedures" for designing programs, awarding contracts, and monitoring performance.

Nevertheless, the Cooper committee recommended seven changes in NIH program policies and mechanisms in an effort to eliminate weaknesses and enhance the credibility of all NIH programs, as well as the contract mechanism which is used to carry out some of those programs. (See "Recommendations," Page 2.) The recommendations will be considered by the NIH director's office and by the directors of all ten institutes at NIH. Informed opinion suggests that most, if not all, of the recommendations will probably be accepted.

But there is not apt to be any significant change in the contract mechanism at the National Cancer Institute, the target of most of the criticism from biomedical researchers. For one thing, the National Cancer Act gave NCI considerable autonomy, and top NIH officials are not certain they have the authority to tell the cancer program how to handle its contracting procedures. For another thing, the cancer program's national board has already heard a presentation about cancer contracting procedures, and, according to Robert W. Berliner, NIH deputy director for science, it "concluded that everything is under control."—PMB

Correction

SGR Vol. III, No. 4 erred in reporting that the recently completed agreement for the creation of a US-Israeli Binational Science Foundation calls for a direct US contribution of \$30 million for the Foundation's endowment. Israel's desire for such a contribution was long a stumbling block to completion of the agreement, which, in its final form provides for \$30 million of Israel's own funds plus \$30 million in pre-payment of a loan that it owes the US. Both amounts will be credited to the endowment and interest from them will be available to the Foundation.

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NIH Aiming to Ease Fiscal Plight With Cancer Funds

The National Institutes of Health is quietly working out a scheme to use the newly acquired affluence of the National Cancer Institute as a source of support for research that might not normally fall within NCI's jurisdiction.

According to the recently released transcript of the November meeting of the President's Cancer Panel, the idea originated with a committee of the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine, which serves as a consultant to the National Cancer Plan. During the meeting, Panel Chairman Benno C. Schmidt stated: "One of the concerns of the Committee of the Institute of Medicine was that there might be very high priority basic research that would have significance for cancer but would not be directly related to cancer and would not get funded because it was referred to one of the other institutes for funding. It was felt that if such basic science were relevant to cancer, there should be some mechanism for considering it

for funding by the National Cancer Institute. . . ."

NCI Director Frank Rauscher replied that "the Grants Referral Office of the Division of Research Grants is now taking great pains to make sure of two things: That there is proper identification of institutes for each grant and that in those cases where a grant seems to have applications to more than one institute, that it is assigned to both."

Panel Member Robert A. Good, director of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, stated: "The other point the Committee of the Institute made is that it might strengthen matters to have a committee appointed for the National Institutes of Health that would permit and facilitate the Cancer Institute looking at unfunded projects that might be considered of importance as science basic to cancer which could then be funded by the Cancer Institute, particularly projects that would fall in the priority range where they are certainly excellent projects important to cancer but might, with a shortage of funds, not be supported by another institute."

To which Schmidt replied that he had received indications that NIH would "take steps to see that such an arrangement was worked out."

Push For Smaller Cars?

High government and scientific officials are giving increasing thought to the desirability of reducing the size of the gas-guzzling, pollutant-emitting cars that clog American highways.

The idea was propounded recently by Robert L. Sansom, assistant administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in a Jan. 10 speech to the International Automotive Engineering Congress and Exposition in Detroit. Describing the automobile as "an overweight waster of our natural resources," Sansom argued that the weight of an automobile is the most significant factor affecting its fuel economy. He suggested that a sharp reduction in the average weight of all new cars could thus reduce gasoline consumption and ease the energy crisis.

Meanwhile, Philip Handler, president of the National Academy of Sciences, the government's chief source of outside scientific advice, advanced somewhat similar thoughts in a Feb. 15 cover letter accompanying an Academy report to Congress on the automobile emissions problem. Handler noted that the automobile has "accelerated depletion of several critical natural resources" and has "scarred the land and choked the city." In the long run, he said, truly effective mechanisms for emissions control must include "a substantial reduction in the mean size (weight, volume, and horsepower) of those automobiles which do function in the city."

Thus far such considerations are mere talk. But Sansom has raised the question of whether the government should consider tax incentives or mandatory regulations aimed at reducing vehicle weight and improving fuel economy.

NSF to Permit Private Laboratories to Perform Validation Testing

Complaints from private testing laboratories have led the National Science Foundation to include them, as well as the previously announced federal research centers, in its new experimental program of subsidizing "validation testing" for technological innovations. (SGR Vol. III, No. 1).

The testing program, part of NSF's Experimental R&D Incentives Program, is designed to certify the feasibility of proposed innovations so as to make it easier for inventors to attract venture capital.

According to an NSF announcement, eligibility has been extended to "certain private testing laboratories where a system for Federal assurance of quality has already been established." An NSF spokesman said the "system" referred to is simply satisfactory past performance of contract work for the government, but he said this does not rule out the possibility of newcomers to federal work taking part if it is clear they have the required competence.

Titled Project 1 of the Experimental R&D Incentives Program, a fact sheet containing details is available without charge from: Evan Anderson, NSF, Room 549, 1800 G St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20050.

Nixon Kicks Out Top Arms Control Officials

Through the forced-resignation process, the administration has quietly pushed out the top echelons of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, while so severely cutting ACDA's budget that effective if not formal dissolution may be ahead.

ACDA Director Gerard C. Smith voluntarily resigned earlier this year, after, according to widespread reports, having tangled with Henry Kissinger, the President's indisputable superchief for national security affairs. Smith and his agency were credited with the complex staff work for the successfully completed SALT agreement, but Smith later was cut out of congressional briefings on the agreement and suffered assorted protocol snubs when the agreement was formally signed.

Subsequently, resignations were demanded and accepted from all four of the presidentially appointed assistants who served under him: James F. Leonard, head of the international relations bureau; Spurgeon M. Keeny Jr., head of the science and technology bureau; Robert H. B. Wade, head of the economics bureau, and Vice Admiral J. M. Lee, head of the weapons evaluation and control bureau. In addition, several other officials further down the line are also reported to be on the way out. The only top official who is apparently being retained is Deputy Director Philip J. Farley.

As for budget authority, it was set at \$10

million for the current fiscal year, but the President is seeking only \$6.7 million for the year starting next July 1.

Resignations were also exacted from the outside advisory committee that serves ACDA, but the members have not yet been advised whether the administration plans to accept them.

The decimation of ACDA—which was originally established to institutionalize arms control at a high level within the administration—can be looked upon as just another bureaucratic reshuffle. But, in fact, it is harmonious with the Nixon administration's efforts to stamp out both in-house and advisory dissidence. Neither ACDA nor the President's Science Advisory Committee was ever afforded an opportunity to raise a rumpus, but both were created in a bygone time when it was considered wise for the government to be served by established channels for bringing alternative ideas to the attention of high administration officials. The President and his chosen associates, however, share a low tolerance for disagreement and long ago stopped listening to anything but playbacks of their own notions.

The charge of "one-man rule" is perhaps a rhetorical excess, but the correct number is no great multiple of one.

In Print

Recent publications of more than routine interest

Science, Technology, and Public Policy, Volume III, an 868-page selective annotated bibliography covering "significant works on public policy for science and technology" published in English 1968-70, available without charge from the Planning and Policy Office, National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. 20550. Volumes I and II, covering 1945-67, are out of print. The current volume was prepared under the direction of Lyn-ton K. Caldwell, professor of political science, Indiana University, under a contract between NSF and the Indiana University Foundation.

Federal Funds for Research, Development and Other Scientific Activities, Fiscal Years 1971, 1972 and 1973, NSF's latest compilation of all the numbers, listed by types of R&D, state and regions of recipients, granting agencies, and other criteria, too. Accompanied by a specious press release citing a "rising trend," but noting that "The 1972 and 1973 figures . . . do not reflect subsequent congressional actions or changes made by Executive apportionment." Let 'em eat trends! (NSF 72-317,

202 pages, \$2.75, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20042).

Three newly issued reports, prepared under the auspices of and available without charge from the House Science and Astronautics Committee (Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C.) are:

Solar Energy Research, a Multidisciplinary Approach, 119 pages, urges a "carefully planned, systematically directed and sustained program to develop solar energy systems." But cautions that "solar energy is at best a very long range future solution to the problem of meeting US requirements for electrical energy";

Industrial Materials, Technological Problems and Issues for Congress, 24 pages, waffles around the issue of whether a materials shortage exists or is impending; undistinguished, but a useful reminder that the issue, rich in industrial and research implications, is perking in Congress and that several monumental reports on the subject are due out later this year;

What About Water? A staff survey of current research on water resources and utilization, 59 pages, tells who's working in the field.

NIH Grantees Face Cuts

The NIH plans to reduce its support of many existing grants and use the money saved to finance new research projects.

The action is being taken to alleviate problems caused by a precipitous drop in the NIH budget for new competitive grants. Under the Nixon administration's austerity budgets, total NIH funds allocated for support of new competing grants are scheduled to drop from \$208 million in fiscal 1972 to \$159 million in 1973 to \$120 million in 1974, a drastic 40-percent decline over the two-year period. Meanwhile, the so-called "non-competing" grants—namely those part way through a multi-year investigation—were largely untouched by the budget cutters.

The problems caused by this policy are most severe at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, where there is essentially no money to support new projects during the last quarter of the current year, fiscal 1973. Consequently, NIH's top management has authorized the institute to reduce the budgets of its non-competing projects by an average of 15 per cent; the money saved will be used to support new projects and competitive renewal proposals.

Robert W. Berliner, NIH's deputy director for science, predicts that, in fiscal 1974, which starts July 1, virtually all of the institutes at NIH will cut non-competing grants somewhat in order to fund new projects. Such action is necessary, he said, so as "not to drive good investigators totally out of business."

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Senate Shows Little Interest In Abolition of Science Office

The presidential reorganization plan that abolishes the White House Office of Science and Technology (OST) was briefly and passively reviewed Feb. 22 by a subcommittee of the Senate Government Operations Committee.

The tone for the proceedings was sounded at the outset when Chairman Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.) said, "Historically, Congress has allowed the President wide latitude in organizing his own office and so far no opposition has developed to this plan."

Ribicoff added, however, questions had arisen concerning, "Does this reorganization downgrade the voice of the scientific community within the Executive branch?"

The only witnesses speaking to the matter were Fred Malek, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, and NSF Director H. Guyford Stever, the newly designated Science Adviser. Malek explained that "it is no longer necessary to have a single office within the Executive Office specifically directed to science and technology."

Stever said that NSF has "many inputs to the scientific community and they have many inputs to NSF," and that he expected that the routes for advice would remain many and open.

The demise of OST occupied perhaps 10 percent of the nearly two hour hearing, most of which was devoted to a provision of the reorganization plan that abolishes the Office of Emergency Preparedness and replaces its director with a deputy secretary of the Treasury as ex officio chairman of the Oil Policy Committee.

As far as OST was concerned, the subcommittee's interest seemed to be based merely on politeness.

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Congress Drops HEW Budget Fight

The House and Senate have abandoned their hopes of ramming through a 1973 appropriations bill for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) over President Nixon's objections.

In the last session Congress twice passed appropriations bills for HEW that were vetoed by the President as excessive and inflationary. So, late in the session, Congress passed a continuing resolution that enabled HEW programs for fiscal 1973, the current year, to continue through Feb. 28 until the hassle over how much money to give HEW could be settled.

It had been assumed that Congress would launch yet another effort in the opening days of its current session to boost HEW spending. But on Feb. 21, the House threw in the sponge by extending the continuing resolution through June 30. As Rep. Daniel J. Flood, (D-Pa.), a member of the House Appropriations Committee, explained matters:

"Two-thirds of the 1973 fiscal year has expired. Frankly, our committee believes that an attempt to enact a third bill would be a wasted effort. It seems very unlikely that a bill which would be acceptable to a majority of the Congress would also be acceptable to the President."

The Senate took similar action on Feb. 26.

"Slippery Water"—Doubts Arise

About Often-Cited "Technological Fix"

In support of their case for applying science and technology to national needs, NSF officials have often cited the case of "slippery water," shorthand for increasing the output of fire-fighting hoses by pre-mixing water with a chemical substance that reduces the friction of the water against the inside of the hose.

Now, according to an NSF official, the "technological fix" is clouded by a side effect: "It works fine," he said, "for getting out more water, but the stuff is so slippery that firemen are sliding all over the place when they try to walk on it."

The continuing resolution itself has limited meaning, since the Nixon administration has indicated it does not intend to spend as much as is authorized by the resolution. The resolution would allow the National Institutes of Health, part of the HEW complex, to operate with a 1973 budget of \$2.7 billion, for example, but the Nixon Administration has okayed a budget plan of only \$1.998 billion for NIH.

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